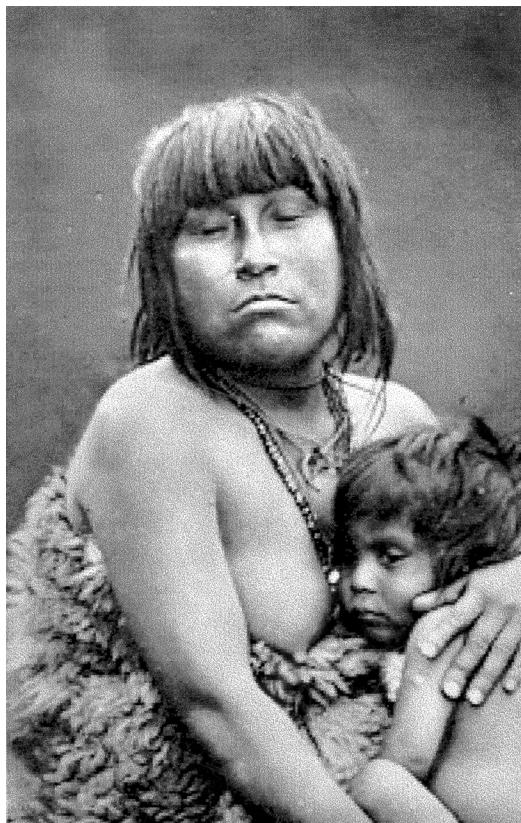


**“On the Applications of Photography to
Anthropology with Respect to the
Photographs Taken of the Fuegians Housed
at the Jardin d’Acclimatation”**

by Doctor Gustave Le Bon

ANTHROPOLOGY SOCIETY OF PARIS
Meeting of November 17, 1881

Robert K. Stevenson: Translator and Editor

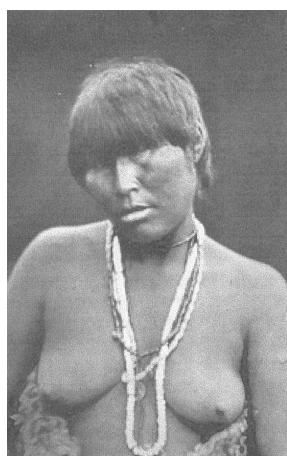


**Fuegian mother and child housed at
the Jardin d’Acclimatation in Paris**

Messieurs, I have the honor of offering to the Society copies of several photographs of the Fuegians currently housed here in Paris at the *Jardin d'Acclimatation*; these pictures were taken with the assistance of my friend, Monsieur Jeanmaire. The subjects are reproduced both in profile and in full face, and attached to each picture is a scale consisting of a strip of paper 1 decimeter in length, which permits one to reconstitute the dimensions of all parts of the body and to execute by consequence on these photographs the same measurements that one is able to carry out upon the living.

Because of the impossibility of getting these individuals to remain absolutely still, their reproduction by the old methods of photography would have been extremely laborious. In fact, a professional photographer who preceded us was obliged to return for five consecutive days, recommencing his operations non-stop for six hours each day. By using a dry emulsion of gelatino-silver bromide, which the latest method of photography calls for, we were able to operate in an instantaneous manner, and therefore did not have to preoccupy ourselves with trying to keep the subjects still. Also, our savages have been caught in the most diverse, but at the same time the most natural, poses. Two infants, of whom one sees only their heads emerging from the blanket wrappings where they are taking refuge, have a very curious physiognomic expression. One of them, who I was annoying a few moments before, kept on crying.

From an aesthetic point of view, these photographs are perhaps not as good as those of the Nubians that I took last year. But, from the photographic point of view, their clearness is complete. We were able to enlarge them considerably, and I expect to show you in an upcoming meeting a print possessing very large dimensions.



Young Fuegian woman

In closing, I must bring to the attention of the Society the importance of the services that can be rendered to anthropology by the new advances realized in photography lately. With the old wet or dry methods, so slow formerly, taking photographs while travelling or conducting fieldwork was very impractical. However, with the new gelatino-silver bromide process, it has become quite an easy thing to do. The equipment that we employed for photographing the Fuegians has the volume of a large dictionary. That which I have taken with me on one of my recent trips and which sustained no damage over the course of 5,000 miles can be kept, with all its accessories, in a small valise. There are few anthropometric measuring instruments that are less voluminous, and I do not know of any anthropometric measurements which can furnish as much information as a good photograph that is provided with a scale. It is therefore desirable that the Society recommends the employment of photography in its *Instructions* and also make it the subject of a special instruction. This instruction is so much the more necessary, being as the majority of the photographs that one meets with in our trade do not furnish useful data from the anthropological point of view, and given that just a few rules will suffice in order to render them, on the contrary, most useful. I must add that photographic plates prepared in advance will last for a very long time and also that, by employing extremely simple methods, one can confer on them any sort of sensitivity. For example, here you see pictures that were taken in four seconds in the interior of a room during a dark day. One may even, in what might only possess a completely theoretical interest, prepare silver bromide to such a degree of sensitivity that it can serve to photograph an object in a room where to the eye this same object remains in total obscurity. Prepared in certain ways silver bromide is, in fact, sensitive to the spectrum's infrared rays which are totally invisible to the eye. If then, through the medium of a prism, one only allows to enter into a room the rays that exist outside of the visible part of the spectrum, the room will be entirely dark to us, and yet one might be able to photograph here some object. In actual practice one contents himself to supply the silver bromide with a sufficient sensitivity so as to produce in sunlit conditions instantaneous images, which permits one to capture all possible facial expressions and to easily photograph, for example, a galloping horse. Above all, one may photograph an individual who is otherwise fearful or suspicious, and from the photographic point of view, it perhaps is most useful in taking pictures of individuals belonging to inferior races.

DISCUSSION

Doctor PAUL TOPINARD (The Secretary-General of the Anthropology). The *Instructions* have recommended for a long time the employment of photography. One should not imagine, however, that photographs can replace good measurements and accurate descriptions, which evidence the shapes that present themselves to us. Even given the most accurately taken photograph (in conformance with prescribed scientific rules), it will always display a central projection with all its illusions.